

## **KEY AREA #7**

### **FAMILY CONCERNS**

1. *Well over 50% of our Army is married.* The percentage is even higher among career soldiers and officers. Family concerns are a readiness concern, a retention concern, and a basic morale concern for every commander.
2. Family Concerns go far deeper than simply insuring that Family Care Plans are maintained or that a Family Support Center (or unit Family Support Group) is in place during times of deployment. Family dissatisfaction is one of the major causes for failure to retain professional, career soldiers or for unit reenlistment problems. This dissatisfaction often relates to the place and role of family concerns in day-by-day unit life, not in critical times such as deployments. This area introduces soldiers to conflicts between family and duty expectations and the values and attitudes they bring to their decisions about these issues.
3. This area is most particularly related to Quality Individual Leadership, Team Building, Gender Issues, and Ethical Development.

*Historical example and case study:*

#### **THE U.S. ARMY AND THE FAMILY: FROM NEGLECT TO CONCERN**

The Army's relationship with its families from 1775 to the present has changed from relative neglect to one of concern and partnership. Recent Army family policies recognize that soldiers perform more efficiently if they are not distracted by overwhelming family concerns. Policies that support and promote the stability of Army families are now seen as contributing to soldier effectiveness, organizational productivity, and as determinants of military retention and readiness.

The nation's new Army, composed largely of young single men, neglected the wives and dependents of its members. It had no legal obligation to provide for the dependents of married officers and NCOs either while they were on active duty or in the event of his death. The first formal acknowledgment of a financial responsibility for its family members was in 1794, when the Army allotted cash payments to widows and orphans of officers killed in battle, a benefit that was soon extended to the families of NCOs.

Married soldiers, as a rule, provided for their families' needs. Wives, known as "camp followers," could receive half-rations when they accompanied their spouse and performed services such as cooking, sewing, cleaning barracks, working in hospitals, and even loading and firing muskets. After the Army authorized company laundresses in 1802, dual-income NCO families were not uncommon. While the low pay for enlisted men dissuaded most from marrying, Army regulations barred officers from marrying until their captaincy. NCOs and enlisted men, moreover, required permission of their company commander to marry. But in 1847 Congress prohibited the enlistment of married men in the Army.

Throughout the post-Civil War era the Army policies sought to discourage soldier marriages and reduced the number of married families. Family quarters, for example, were provided only for senior officers. Other policies denied enlisted men separate housing, free family transportation, and obstructed the reenlistment of married soldiers. The Army provided for married soldiers' families who had fallen on hard times primarily through informal voluntary measures by the wives of officers and NCOs. Female volunteerism, a traditional feature of Army life in the pre-World War II Army, was the wellspring of today's military family support movement. In general, though, Army policies reinforced the notion of an unmarried enlisted corps, and gave rise to the adage, "If the Army had wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued you one."

Except for the conscription of married men during World War I, the peacetime Army banned enlistment of married men and provided little assistance to service members with wives and children. World War I, however, ushered in the first program of family allotments for officers and enlisted personnel, voluntary insurance against death and disability, and other family assistance measures. On the eve of World War II, Congress furnished government housing for soldiers E-4 and above with family members. After the start of hostilities the Army issued a basic allowance for quarters for military families residing in civilian communities. With the exclusion of married men from the service no longer feasible, the Army granted monthly family allowances for a wife and each child. Married females, on the other hand, were barred from enlistment and could be separated from the service because of pregnancy, marriage, and parenthood, a policy that remained in effect until 1975. To deal more effectively with family emergencies, the Secretary of War created the Army Emergency Relief (AER) in February 1942. The AER adopted the slogan; "The Army Takes Care of its Own."

The benefits given to military families during World War II and the creation of the AER signaled a new outlook by the Army toward its families. Family concerns such as the deplorable housing conditions of many married enlisted men, the lack of basic social services, and better educational facilities persisted after the war. Post-Korean War problems in career retention prompted the Army to examine the role of Army families on career decisions of service members. The Army's approach to addressing family concerns remained reactive and piecemeal. The development of the Army Community Services (ACS) organization in 1965 was the Army's first attempt to create an umbrella approach for family support.

Family and quality of life issues grew in importance in the Army during the next several decades. The transition to an all-volunteer force, the large influx of married soldiers, the entry of married women into the workplace, and the service's to gender discrimination in dependency benefits were an impetus for the Army to reevaluate its personnel and family policies. A significant shift in the Army's philosophy on families occurred in 1983 when Army Chief of Staff General John A. Wickham, Jr. issued "The White Paper—The Army Family." This landmark document underscored the Army's recognition that families affect the Army's ability to accomplish its mission. It also provided a mechanism, the annual Army Family Action Plan, whereby the Army could identify and analyze family issues, explore ways to meet family needs and recommend solutions, define area for future Army family research, and evaluate progress. The establishment of installation-based Family Centers have become the focal point for coordinating a rapid response to family needs during periods of crises. The Centers have grown in importance in supporting Army families during each stage of family life and career cycle and when normal patterns of family life are disrupted because of family separation, relocation, and transition to civilian life.

This area is directly supported by the following suggested lesson plans contained in this publication:

They Would Have Issued You One  
Prevention of Sexual Harassment  
Extremism & Extremist Organizations  
EO Complaint Procedures  
Racism & Sexism  
Values, Attitudes, Behaviors, & Self-Awareness  
Communications Process  
Group Development  
Conflict Management